



October 31st, 2019

Dear Councilmembers,

We write to convey our shared support for funding to expand LEAD in 2020, sustain SPD emphasis patrols throughout 2020 and for funding the investments recommended by the Mayor's High Barrier Individual Work Group as well as maintaining funding for the Navigation Team.

We believe LEAD to be a key component of an effective response to individuals who chronically commit lower level law violations due to behavioral health issues and/or extreme poverty -- violations that often cause serious problems for individuals, businesses and neighborhood health, order and vitality. LEAD has unique assets that we should build on: a legal framework for information sharing between law enforcement and social workers, neighborhood-based work spaces, existing, thoughtfully vetted protocols for how disparate partners work together, a data-sharing platform slated to come online in spring 2020 through a generous gift from Microsoft, and a model that has been evaluated for efficacy on individual recidivism, cost and participant wellbeing.

We also support scaling LEAD citywide by 2023, and a planning process next year that accurately projects the scope of what "to scale" means, so planning for increased funding can proceed orderly and without surprises in the future.

We see LEAD as an important complement to several of the Mayor's High Barrier Individuals proposals. We urge you to fund these investments in the 2020 budget and look forward to working together to further develop each concept in the year ahead. We support augmented jail release planning -- to connect individuals to community-based supports, including LEAD. We support case conferencing, an approach modeled after LEAD, and agree that the City Attorney's Office should dedicate an assistant City Attorney to coordinate all the tools of the criminal legal system to support behavior change of people who chronically violate the law. That lawyer should be able to confer with LEAD case managers, who are legally able to share information, and with law enforcement, to develop appropriate interventions that support reductions in recidivism. We also support investment in the enhanced shelter planned for what was the West Wing of the King County Jail and believe there are opportunities to include LEAD as part of the discharge plan for individuals utilizing the facility. We also support maintaining funding for the Navigation Team, who regularly coordinates with LEAD and neighborhood partners.

We are committed to three steps in 2020 to improve the impact of LEAD and the city's response to high barrier individuals:

- Borrowing from some innovations implemented in the Minneapolis Downtown 100 program, we are committed to developing a more comprehensive neighborhood-based approach to identify and refer individuals with repeated law violations to LEAD and ensure the response to those referrals is transparent and well-understood by businesses and neighborhoods.
- The LEAD project management team is committed to working with justice system partners and police, as well as business and social service organizations, to establish a problem-solving table to examine other strategies that might usefully be brought to bear on individuals who have not had success through LEAD, have had significant interactions with the criminal justice system and create negative impact on neighborhoods.
- We are committed to supporting a channel to secure permanent housing for individuals who pose greatest issues for neighborhoods and face significant barriers to obtaining permanent housing; innovations in methamphetamine treatment; and state and Medicaid resources both for LEAD and for community-based care for individuals who are rebuffed by or are released from the civil commitment system.

We urgently need to make a meaningful impact with respect to individuals who commit law violations due to behavioral health conditions that are likely to respond well to coordinated, high quality community-based care. We urge you to expand LEAD, sustain SPD emphasis patrols, fund new investments recommended by the Mayor's High Barrier Individual Workgroup and maintain funding for the Navigation Team because we must evolve our response to individuals creating significant impact on businesses and neighborhoods by prioritizing housing, enhanced shelter and services for this population.

Sincerely,

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Lisa Dugaard, Director
Public Defenders Association

Erin Goodman, Executive Director
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Lisa Howard, Executive Director
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